

## Editorial

Welcome to the first issue of *Professions and Professionalism*, a new interdisciplinary journal. This online journal is being launched with the goal of publishing papers on topics specifically related to professions, professionalisation and professionalism. To the best of our knowledge, very few such English language journals are published worldwide on a regular basis.

What sets *Professions and Professionalism* apart from other journals that publish articles on professions and professionalism is its interdisciplinary scope. We welcome empirical, theoretical and review articles approached from any perspective and discipline. We also look forward to receiving contributions that are interdisciplinary in the sense that they draw on multiple disciplinary and theoretical approaches to transcend limitations within single perspectives. In addition, we are open to critical approaches informed, for instance, by, but not limited to, feminist and postcolonial theories and intersectional approaches. Contributions that address a variety of aspects of professions and professionalism are encouraged. Even though empirical research on professional groups and their practices is unavoidably specialised, we believe that viewing various aspects together helps provide a broader understanding of professional life and work, which in turn benefits the entire research field. Moreover, we think that comparative approaches provide important insight into what professions and professionalism are all about. We do not advocate that all studies should include multiple occupational groups; however, we do believe that the use of comparative perspectives in studies on individual professions helps shed light on the uniqueness and commonness of individual occupational groups. By establishing a new journal, we hope to develop this field of research further and to attract attention to professions and professionalism as research areas and perspectives.

Although the number of research studies on professions has increased in the past few decades, this area of research remains ambiguous and heterogeneous. The ambiguity and heterogeneity of the research may have a basis in the diverse terminology used by researchers. In everyday language, the word *profession* is simply used as another word for *occupation*. In the literature, the term *profession* is used in a descriptive way and a normative way. As a descriptive term, it is generally restricted to expert occupations that 'apply somewhat abstract knowledge to particular cases' (Abbott, 1988, p. 8). Whereas some researchers use this term as a category for a wide range of occupational groups, others prefer to use it in a more restricted sense. When scholars use the term *profession* as a normative term, the concept often presupposes occupational quality standards and ethical codes. By contrast, scholars who are critical of professional power have emphasised professionalism as a way in which to monopolise access to profitable occupations.

Although the normative aspects of professions and professionalism are highly contested, they tend to fascinate scholars who use them as analytical concepts in an attempt to understand expert occupational groups and their role in our modern knowledge society.

This journal is affiliated with the Nordic Network for the Study of Professions (NORPRO). One of the reasons for establishing this network has been the increasing interest in professions and professionalism exhibited in these countries. The Nordic welfare states are often characterised as a common model, but significant differences do exist. We believe that contributions from different countries will help increase our understanding of professions and professionalism. Studies across countries are especially valuable in this respect. It should also be emphasised that this journal is not restricted to publishing research articles from the Nordic region. Contributions from researchers worldwide are important in developing this field of research. However, we hope that our authors recognise the situatedness of their work in their articles. A truly international field of scholarship on professions and professionalism can build only on attention to how the preconditions of professionalisation and professionalism depend on time and place.

*Professions and Professionalism* is an open access journal that publishes its articles electronically. In just a relatively few short years, downloading articles electronically has become the way in which researchers remain connected and stay updated in their teaching and research. The electronic format also helps significantly reduce the time from acceptance to publication. There should be no need to defend the open access solution; it corresponds to a core value in the scientific community. The fact that this journal is not published by a publishing house does, however, pose some challenges. A publishing house provides some degree of assurance of the academic standards of the journal and aids with the distribution of the journal. Nevertheless, the reputation of a journal relies primarily on the quality and relevance of the articles that are published. From the very beginning, we have emphasised that all articles be based on original research and be reviewed by at least two referees whose expertise suits the topic of the given submission. The submitted articles should meet the same academic standards set by other international journals in the social sciences. We have also established an editorial board and an advisory board of distinguished scholars that will help us to develop the journal in accordance with these aims.

Another important reason for choosing the online-only solution is, of course, an economic one. We are grateful to the Public Knowledge Project for developing the software and making it available free of charge. We are also indebted to the Learning Centre and Library at Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences for providing help and support in getting started and for distributing links to all sorts of library databases around the world. In addition, we would like to use this opportunity to thank the referees for their contributions.

In summary, the aims of the journal are as follows:

- To develop the study of professions and professionalism theoretically and empirically
- To contribute to the development of the study of professions and professionalism as an internationally oriented interdisciplinary field of research

- To become an important publication channel for both Nordic researchers and the international research community

The articles selected for publication in the first issue of *Professions and Professionalism* reflect the aims of our journal. There are contributions from three Nordic countries and one from a Canadian and French team.

In his theoretical article, Thomas Brante argues for a clearer definition of the term *profession* and proposes a scientific knowledge base to be the central characteristic. This is also considered one of the core elements of the classical definitions of the term *profession*.

Our understanding of professions and professionalism may be further developed by studies of occupations that are seldom considered to be professions. Raija Pyykkö and her colleagues' article on the diaconal work in Finland is one such study. It not only sheds light on an occupational group that is rarely the focus of research but also demonstrates the relevance of central perspectives within the study of professions.

In his article, Arne Mastekaasa explores the common assumption that autonomy is crucial to professionals by comparing assessments of the importance of autonomy amongst selected professional groups, on the one hand, and the general population, on the other.

Professionals are frequently accused of emphasising occupational jurisdiction rather than collaboration. Joron Phil's study addresses inter-professional collaboration between teachers and librarians and examines the preconditions for developing collective learning processes. She concludes that inter-professional collaboration may be hindered by state-promoted conceptions of professionalism and occupational values.

Last, but not least, Ivy Bourgeault and her Canadian and French colleagues explore the relationship between professions and organisations, a relationship that is generally regarded as between opposed entities. Based on a review of classic and contemporary literature, they develop a more explicit and dynamic conceptualisation of the relationship involving professions, organisations and clients.

#### *Editorial team*

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#### **Reference**

Abbott, A. (1988). *The system of professions: An essay on the division of expert labor*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.